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GOVERNOR DAVIS RECOGNIZES LOS ANGELES 13-YEAR-OLD AS WINNER IN DESIGN-A-CLEAN-AIR AD DESIGN CONTEST

BELLFLOWER—A 13-year-old student from southeast Los Angeles County was honored today by Governor Davis for his winning entry in the 1999 Design-A-Clean-Air Ad contest sponsored by the California Department of Consumer Affairs/Bureau of Automotive Repair.

Elek Rico, a eighth grader at Bellflower Middle School, was recognized at a school assembly by Department of Consumer Affairs representative Freeman Baldwin. He presented Elek with a letter from Gov. Davis congratulating him on his winning entry.

Baldwin was joined by Lori Strakosch of Hitachi, Ltd., which donated a 32-inch television and VCR to the winner's school.

Elek's winning design was professionally produced and published this week in the Los Angeles Times. Using the slogan, "Thank You For Not Smogging!" as his headline, he showed two men, one with unhealthy lungs struggling to breathe on auto emissions and another with clear lungs breathing clean air. The text: "If you like breathing CO, CO₂, NO_x and hydrocarbons, go ahead. If you're like me and want clean air, pass your Smog Check!"

"Elek's design very effectively communicated the dangerous health effects of breathing air pollution," Baldwin said, "and it carried through the personal responsibility message to show something everyone can do to make a difference."

"I wanted people to know that to enjoy their life we have to have clean air," Elek said. "My teacher, (Mrs.) Nancy Swenson, taught us about air pollution in class, and all the bad chemicals in smog, especially from cars. I wanted to tell people that when you create smog, you're not just hurting yourself, you're hurting everyone. You're hurting your future."

The contest was conducted as part of a 15-week curriculum called "Drive Away the Smog" that is sponsored each year by the California Department of Consumer Affairs/Bureau of Automotive Repair. The curriculum was developed and is administered in partnership with the Los Angeles Times' "Times in Education" program.

More than 2,000 teachers throughout Southern California, Sacramento, and the Central Valley have taught the curriculum this year. The curriculum helps schoolchildren – before they reach driving age – understand the problems caused by air pollution and how changes in their personal behavior can make the air healthier.

Times in Education (TIE) provides copies of the newspaper and educational materials for use in the classroom by students (kindergarten through adult). Materials teach subject-specific or core learning skills and meet classroom goals as defined by the State of California Frameworks for Public Schools. TIE programs are offered to schools at no cost due to the generous sponsorships of individuals, small businesses, organizations and corporations.

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